

Message Text

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PAGE 01 VALLET 00284 101334Z
ACTION EUR-12

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INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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R 101252Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY VALLETTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7274
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR, MT, US
SUBJECT: INTERVIEW WITH PRIME MINISTER MINTOFF

1. THE FIRST ISSUE OF A NEW MALTA LABOR PARTY WEEKLY
NEWSPAPER IL QUDDIEM FIS-SLIEM ("FORWARD IN PEACE"), ON
MARCH 5 CARRIED A FRONT PAGE "INTERVIEW" WITH PRIME
MINISTER MINTOFF ON THE SUBJECT OF MALTESE FOREIGN POLICY.

2. THE TRANSLATED TEXT OF THE INTERVIEW FOLLOWS: BEGIN
TEXT: "EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH MINTOFF
"WHEN THE BRITISH LEAVE IN 1979 THERE ARE TWO ROADS
THAT MALTA CAN FOLLOW. THE FIRST ONE IS FOR US TO BE
FRIENDS EQUALLY WITH THE ARABS AND SOUTHERN EUROPE. THE
SECOND IS THAT, WITHOUT FIGHTING WITH EUROPE, WE WOULD
BE CLOSER TO THE ARABS.'

"THE ABOVE WAS STATED BY PRIME MINISTER DOM MINTOFF
IN AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH THIS NEWSPAPER. HE
EXPLAINED HOW SOUTHERN EUROPE NEVER GAVE ANYTHING TO
MALTA BEFORE 1971, WHEN THE SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT WAS
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ELECTED.
"BEFORE THIS DATE, THE EUROPEAN COUNTRIES, INDIVIDUALLY
AND COLLECTIVELY IN NATO, HAD THEIR MINDS AT REST BECAUSE
WE WERE UNDER THE BRITISH. IT WAS ONLY IN 1971 THAT THEY
EVEN TOOK NOTICE OF US AND THAT WE ASSUMED OUR IDENTITY.
" BEFORE 1971, RELATIONS WITH WEST GERMANY DID NOT
EXIST. ITALY GAVE US NEXT TO NOTHING AND FRANCE HAD NOT

GIVEN ANYTHING TO MALTA. NOW SEE WHAT IS COMING FROM THERE, WHEN OUR TIES ARE LESS. THESE COUNTRIES ARE RECEIVING LESS FROM MALTA THAN THEY USED TO RECEIVE IN THE PAST, AND THEY ARE GIVING US MORE.

" WE TELL THESE COUNTRIES WITHOUT BEATING ABOUT THE BUSH: WE WAGED SO MANY WARS ON YOUR BEHALF AND YOU GAVE US NOTHING, WHILE THE ARABS GIVE US SO MUCH.'

"ABOUT THE MEDITERRANEAN BECOMING A SEA OF PEACE, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT THE MALTESE GOVERNMENT NEVER CLAIMED IT WOULD SOLVE ALL THIS REGION'S PROBLEMS OVERNIGHT 'BECAUSE THIS WOULD MEAN THAT WE WOULD SOLVE THE PROBLEMS BETWEEN THE JEWS AND THE ARABS, THE MOROCCAN, CYPRUS AND OTHER PROBLEMS.'

" WHEN TWO ARE FIGHTING ONE ANOTHER IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO BREAK THEM APART. TRUE PEACE REQUIRES WORKING TOWARDS CREATING CONDITIONS SO THAT THEY WILL NOT HAVE ANY REASON TO FIGHT ANY MORE. THIS IS WHAT WE ARE WORKING TOWARDS.'

"THE NATIONAL LEADER SAID THAT 'SINCE WE CHANGED POLICY IN 1971, WE HAVE ALREADY DONE WELL, THOUGH WE HAVE ONLY STARTED. IF SO MUCH HAS BEEN ACHIEVED AT THE BEGINNING, HOW MUCH BETTER WILL WE FARE WHEN WE BECOME REALLY INDEPENDENT.'" END TEXT

3. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THIS ARTICLE DID NOT CONTAIN ANY NEW INSIGHTS INTO MINTOFF'S THINKING, SINCE HE HAS MADE SIMILAR REMARKS IN PARLIAMENT AND IN PUBLIC SPEECHES ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS, IT IS RARE FOR HIM TO BE QUOTED DIRECTLY IN THE LOCAL PRESS IN THIS MANNER. HIS MAIN THEME, THAT MALTA WAS "TREATED BADLY" IN THE PAST AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DESERVES TO BE "GIVEN MORE" IN THE FUTURE, SO THE MALTESE CAN BECOME "REALLY INDEPENDENT", IS ONLY TOO FAMILIAR. ON THE OTHER HAND, HIS EXPRESSED AWARENESS IN THIS ARTICLE OF THE DIFFICULTIES OF ACHIEVING "PEACE" IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SHOWS MORE REALISM THAN SOME OF HIS PAST STATEMENTS ON THIS SUBJECT. END COMMENT. LAINGEN

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Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 10-Mar-1977 12:00:00 am
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Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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Disposition History: n/a
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